



Vote Day



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Chapter 1 by Lance Felix

Once every ten years, everyone in the city gathers in the public square for a vote. Attendance is mandatory and strictly enforced, but nobody really knows what would happen if they missed it. They just go.

Not that they want to. Not even a little bit. For some, voting day turns into the worst day in their lives. For others, it's just a bitter, unwelcome memory. For children, it's nightmares.

It's called a vote, but it really isn't, at least not for the citizens. Somehow the names of every person in the city, whether it be children or adults, end up in some sort of abstract hat from which names are pulled. No one understands how or why it happens, and they dare not speculate. They don't think about it, or why it happens, because the ones who do go mad with despair.

The vote determines which citizens have lost their souls.

Chapter 2 by Kitiōn



There is no recorded history of how this process of selection started, and in our society where surveillance is the norm - all things pass unquestioned.

My strongest memories of my mother & father were always in the ninth year cycle, because as time drew closer we also drew closer. My mother was a maths professor & my father a theoretician for the genetics stabilization program. My childhood was lived in academia but I

was a slow learner and for many years my educational stabilization grades were sub-standard and at times I felt that my parents were disappointed in me.

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officials, and eventually it resulted in him being reassigned to abstract theoretics of soul voting on the eighth month of the ninth year.

Two months later I was an orphan.

Chapter 3 by Kitiōn



The unwelcome day was gradually approaching, and the Church of Eugenics was already broadcasting it's list of events & celebrations for the forthcoming Vote.

Soon the compulsory DNA transmitters would be arriving to each individual, so that they could all be identified at the Vote. There was no escape from the constant reminders, and all the time families would be more tightly knotted together as the day drew nearer.

I have experienced 2 Votes, and the fear & anxiety is indescribable, and if your lucky to avoid selection in the Vote, your relief is based upon another's suffering. Many after the event go and give thanks at the church of eugenics, and in return are blessed with the Holy Vial of the Anointed, after-which they attend their districts celebrations.

For those that lose there souls it's a different matter. They are outcasts even with their own families, and they never return back to there homes. They are not allowed to cross over district boarders, or use any form of public utility or service - they just some how vanish, and nobody ever questions it.

My father & mother once told me the soul could never be taken, but the will could be broken.

I miss my parents.

Mother, Father I love you.

Chapter 4 by intellikat



The evening before Vote Day, I found myself at the age of 17 being offered a stiff drink by a

stranger. I met him on the outskirts of town, where I should not have been, but I needed to walk somewhere freely alone, and to... I was a part of. There were so many thoughts and emotions swirling in my head as the day approached.

In the dying light, I almost didn't see him there, propped against a stone from the old city's wall. He was slumped to one side, wearing a tattered coat, with unkempt hair and beard. There was

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really only one thing he could be.

I approached him carefully, but I had little fear. It was more excitement over the opportunity to speak with one of his kind. As I said, they all for the most part vanish, and no one hears from them again.

Chapter 5 by intellikat



I took the drink, It was my first. I coughed. The man peered at me from beneath a battered brim, with what looked to be a smile.

"How you feel?" he said.

"It's not my first," I lied. "Just a bit of a dry throat."

"About the day tomorrow. How you feel?"

I handed the flask back to him. I looked about me. The time was short.

"Are you one of them?"

"Them?"

"An empty-- I'm sorry. One of the voted?"

"Indeed I am."

"I've never spoken to a voted."

"I have a name. It's Denis."

He drank from the flask and then offered it to me again. I paused, and then decided to drink again.

"How old are you?"

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"Twenty-four. My first Vote Day was when I was child."

"Do you have a name?"

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"Alan Westing. My parents were Thomas and Lorraine Westing. Do you know them?"

The man frowned and shook his head. "You speak of them in the past tense?"

I changed the subject. "Do the voted know one another?"

"Yes, of course. Of course we do. Not all, obviously. But some. Those who survive the ordeal."

"The ordeal of being outcast?"

"There's more to it than that, Alan. Outcast don't simply disappear because their rights are denied them. They disappear because of the Overmind."

"What is that?"

"The Overmind was designed to research scenarios for our planet's survival early in the 21st century. It was a governmental application to aid in our survival. When it ceased serving that function, it was repurposed. To break souls. Or minds. It's merely a choice of words, the end is the same. Very few survive the presence of the Overmind, and go crazy within the first month of their being outcast."

"How it is that you can be telling me this now?"

"We're all crazy, you know. The soulless. The empties. There's no harm in our ramblings, though of course you must know it is forbidden to entertain us. Luckily for you, we speak on the outskirts of town. You have not welcome me anywhere, and so we stand on neutral ground."

As Denis finished these words, the sound of hoofbeats came to my ears and I turned frightfully to see two soldiers approaching on horseback. The leader held a device aloft, and before either Denis or I could do anything about it, there was a hum in the air and I hears Denis scream and clutch at his head in pain.

Chapter 11: The Outcasts

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Before Denis is done for, he says

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"We are not the soulless, in fact we are the best of the human soul. We are not the soulless!"

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Chapter 7 by Caleb



Of course everyone was horrified and angered by such brutal, senseless violence, but no one else had horses, or humming brain-melting devices. Still, the small bar on the outskirts, which was not very popular anyway, closed for the day and afterward business was so abysmal that in two weeks the pub closed forever and its owner sold the building to an enormous real estate acquisition firm which was stuffing its 'Outskirts' portfolio in a long-term investment based on the the area's combination of access to city utilities and record low property tax values.

Of course the very next day was the voting. I, Alan Westing, still shaken from the murder he witnessed earlier, and drunk from the sleepless night that followed during which he did nothing but stair at the ceiling hearing the words "We are not the soulless, in fact we are the key to finding your souls. We are not the soulless!" over and over again in his mind, was not even surprised when he heard my name called.

No one was surprised actually.

For me, Alan Westing, the reason I was not surprised was that in that very moment, I felt soulless. I was glad to be outcast. I remembered that I was a friendless orphan. I wasn't particularly well off, and I realized there was no point in continuing association with a society that asserts no resistance to a state-mandated silent treatment.

"That's fine." I said. "I'm the soulless one this year. Last night I watched horsemen melt the brain of a soulless in full public view. His name was Denis. I don't know why he was voted soulless or why they melted his brain but before he died he said one thing, he said:

'We are not the soulless, in fact we are the key to finding your souls. We are not the soulless!'

"I don't know why he said that either. But its obviously some silly business going on. What is this Vote? Who Voted for me to be the soulless? I didn't vote for anybody. When was the vote? Are we all just going along with this?"

Suddenly, I felt an enormous pressure in my head and a warm glow around my ears. I heard the sound of horse hooves.

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Chapter 8 by Caleb



I awoke in the dark, my head throbbing. I was upright but every sense beneath my shoulders... my arms, legs, everything was numb and blind.

"How many?"

My head swung around in the dark looking for the voice. I saw nothing.

"Still counting." A different voice replied.

I spoke timidly. "Hello?"

"Its been three hours."

"I know." The voices continued in the dark.

"How many?" The first voice insisted.

"30. Almost 40 now."

"Hello!" I shouted.

"That's great density." Said the first voice, ecstatic. "That's wonderful."

"He's awake." Said the second voice. "Should I turn on the lights?"

"I hear him. Leave them off for now. Alan!" The first voice yelled.

"Yes! Hello! Who are you!" I shouted desperately.

"You're fine! You're doing very well! We'll turn on the lights in a minute we don't want to scare you-"

"Scared of what!? What's happening! I can't feel anything!"

"You're doing great, don't try to move it won't matter at all. We're almost finished. I'd normally put you back to sleep but I'm making an exception. See more of Story Wars I want to speak with you before you're exposed to the Overmind."

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Everything I could feel tensed in a shiver. "What is the Overmind?"

I then heard a large mechanical thump and the sound of air being released.

"He's finished. 43 million." Said the second voice.

"Its a fantastic chance." Said the first. "Alan the Overmind project started almost 30 years ago and honestly... its about the only chance humanity has got. Go ahead and turn on the lights, Mabel."

A burst of incredible white light scored my eyes.

"It can change everything!"

He was older, tall, in a rich, dark suit. She was younger, but barely, tshirt and jeans, They were surrounded by dozens of figures in lab coats, some with masks, all of them behind glass in a wheelhouse above me looking out over the room. The room was spacious and tall. All the walls were pipes and cables, and massive dormant fans. I was seated in the center of it all, wired to a chair with hundreds, maybe thousands of tiny cables plugged into every inch of me. I was an explosion of electronics. My heart raced. "What is all this!?"

"I know its very frightening but its just sensory equipment. I'm afraid this is as gentle as we've been able to make it. Its going to hurt in a minute but then you'll numb out again. Mabel go ahead and warm up the Overmind."

Immediately the entire building began to shake.

"60 years ago, completely by accident a psychologist and inventor named Johansson was the first to sense the human 'soul' with electronic equipment! The beginning of an era!" The man shouted above the din from the wheelhouse. "He didn't know what he had found! It wasn't until his death ten years later that the first great secret was unlocked and the Church of Eugenics was formed."

I felt a tingling sensation across my entire body, the end of every wire was beginning to itch, and

I began to feel the tremor of the building.

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"You want to know the secret don't you!" He shouted.

"I want out of here!" I screamed.

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"There is only one soul! Distributed across every human being. Its field of energy and for 50 years the Church has monitored the strength of its signal!"

The enormous fans kicked on and began blowing wildly, the room flushed with cool air and the noise and rumbling became even louder.

"Its getting weaker Alan! It has been since Johansson found it!" He shouted loudly. "Every ten years the field deteriorates and in another 30 years it'll be gone!"

The wires in my arms stinging with heat.

"Your father discovered the Overmind, Alan! He was first to manipulate the soul, he's a hero!"

"Its ready!" Yelled the girl.

"What are you doing to me!"

"Try to remember as much as you can, Alan! Its very important!"

I seized in the chair, a thousand fiery tips peaking with energy across my body. The room began melting and warping around me. I pressed my eyes shut and my stomach flipped and lurched. My body felt as though it were hardening and falling away from me like clumps of wet sand.

I was sinking, shrinking. I became smaller and smaller, collapsing farther and farther, deeper and deeper until, finally, far beneath the atomic I felt the traces of an energy. Gradually as I shrank smaller and smaller I felt and the energy grow larger and more powerful until it was massive, until there was nothing else, until it was everything.

And then I felt it feel me. It was conscious. An awareness so vast and deep I was nothing to it I could hide nothing from it. Into my deepest memories and greatest secrets it poured, filling every crack and detail. A being so thin it fit between every atom but so enormous, it swallowed the Earth with billions of appendages, each one with eyes, ears, mouths, legs, and arms.

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flooding through me, each one a point of incredible energy. I began to feel the sensation of inertia, of motion and orientation. I was a city, cities... I was a whole nation. I understood all of it. There was no space, there was no time, there was no when or where only why forever and ever the reasons for everything.

I stretched farther. The field took shape. I could discern pressures, peaks, valleys, strengths, depressions, concentrations of energy, excitement, furies, miseries, circles of irreconcilable imbalance, unfulfilled dependencies, catharsis, claustrophobia, frustration, worship.

I felt parts of me falling away, and separating, millions of my extensions emptying and my eyes and ears within these millions were closing and weakening, unfulfilled and disengaging. But by now I was too vast. I saw the larger and truer purpose and these lesser reasons were meaningless to understand.

Humanity will die...

I felt myself throbbing. I was every human being. I was every mind, heart, soul. I was dying. I would be digested by the Earth and something new would come.

I lurched with nausea, I felt pain from everywhere. I collapsed into the field, millions of minds torn out of me, exploding away. I felt the field seize around me, separating from me, memories of billions of years of lifetimes evaporating from me. I was being rejected, like a virus from its host. I burned and burned and felt the torment of loss for every moment that peeled away. Farther and farther, until I could feel the room again, the lab coats, the man in the suit, the girl, myself. I felt my life unraveling and fading, until I was empty, until I could remember nothing but my name.

the end

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